

State Water Resources Control Board

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Embargoed – until August 4, 2003

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STATE WATER BOARD LAUNCHES \$5 MILLION PUBLIC EDUCATION CAMPAIGN IN LA COUNTY TO “ERASE THE WASTE” CAUSED BY STORM WATER POLLUTION

*Multi-Media Advertising Kicks-off Comprehensive Effort to Engage Residents in
Reducing Neighborhood Pollution and Improving Region’s Water Quality*

LOS ANGELES – The State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB), the State agency responsible for preserving the quality of California’s waters, today launched a two-year, \$5 million public education campaign to reduce harmful storm water pollution in Los Angeles County and improve the environment of the region’s coastal and inland communities. The *Erase the Waste*-themed campaign, which marks the first State-funded countywide storm water public education effort in California, unveiled its first nine-week wave of multi-ethnic paid advertising to Los Angeles residents on August 4, 2003. The campaign includes English and Spanish print, radio and television advertisements – including first-time use of paid, network television advertising to address the storm water issue in the LA media market. Total campaign funding comes from California’s Cleanup and Abatement Account (CAA), which derives funds from court judgments and administrative sanctions levied against corporate, government and industry polluters. All CAA funds, by law, must be used for clean water purposes, and do not represent taxpayer dollars.

“The Davis Administration has made the protection of California’s waters a top priority,” said Arthur Baggett, Jr., Chair, State Water Resources Control Board. “Polluted storm water runoff is the greatest danger to water quality in Southern California and poses significant threats to public health and safety, natural resources, and the region’s economic vitality. Through the *Erase the Waste* storm water campaign, the State is committed to providing critical resources to improve the region’s water quality for Los Angeles County’s 10 million residents.”

The *Erase the Waste* campaign encourages residents to take ownership of their communities, help reduce storm water pollution from the local landscape, and be part of the “pollution solution” by adopting simple, everyday action steps. The multifaceted program will primarily reach out to the region’s “greatest polluters, most likely to change their polluting behaviors.” This group comprises three primary sub-audiences, defined by their unique polluting tendencies and lifestyle characteristics as “*Neat Neighbors*,” “*Fix-It Foul-Ups*,” and “*Rubbish Rebels*.” Collectively, these groups make up more than seven million residents, approximately 72 percent of the total County population, and represent all ethnicities, genders and levels of socio-economic status.

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The *Erase the Waste* program underscores the State of California's commitments to environmental justice and integrated environmental school education. The campaign will include multiple opportunities to reach residents, school-aged children, business and environmental stakeholders, and diverse community-based organizations. In addition to advertising, the campaign will include media relations, partnerships with retailers, corporations, and nonprofit organizations, classroom and service learning projects, and a "hands-on" community engagement campaign that will enlist community stakeholders to bring pollution prevention information and activities into their neighborhoods. All outreach activities will promote the availability of additional environmental tips and resources through its new Erase the Waste web site (www.erasethewaste.com).

The *Erase the Waste* campaign builds on previous Los Angeles storm water pollution prevention efforts that have raised general awareness of the environmental issue. It also dovetails with the Governor's Clean Beach Initiative (CBI), funded by portions of four voter-approved bond measures, which has already begun a cleanup effort statewide through construction of diversion and treatment facilities near beaches. The *Erase the Waste* campaign focuses on the compelling health problem of storm water pollution, which affects the health and safety of families and children. The campaign encourages residents to become actively involved in their neighborhoods and to become a solution to this widespread problem.

"The State's *Erase the Waste* campaign will complement local efforts greatly," said Art Baggett, Jr. Chair, SWRCB. "The State's \$5 million investment, combined with the next phase of Los Angeles County's storm water campaign, represents a 400 percent increase in annual funding for the next two year's of storm water pollution prevention in Los Angeles. To ensure the success of this critical effort, we call on all residents and stakeholders to do their part in reducing polluting activities and in helping to protect Los Angeles' natural resources for future generations."

"Heal the Bay applauds the State for taking a strong leadership role in funding this critical storm water public education program," said Mark Gold, Executive Director, Heal the Bay. "We won't make our beaches safe for swimming and our waterways pollution-free, until all LA County residents change their habits and become a critical part of the solution. This campaign will go a long way towards achieving that goal."

The advertising campaign uses a combination of dramatic and humorous approaches to illustrate the human consequences of pollution and encourage pollution-reducing behaviors. The focus on priority regional pollutants corresponds with the conservative estimates that every month, LA County residents: drop one million cigarette butts in streets, parks and playgrounds; toss 900,000 pieces of trash on the ground; and that dog owners fail to pick up their dog's droppings

125,000 times. Action-oriented, pollutant-specific ad placements include: "*Hold on to Your Butts*" and "*Cause & Effect*" (focus: cigarette butts); "*Drop Something?*" (focus: pet waste); "*Health Threat*" and "*Take One for the Team*" (focus: litter). The ads will run on a targeted mix of major market radio, network television, and print media from August 4, 2003 – October 5, 2003.

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Storm water pollution is created when litter, animal droppings, cigarette butts, motor oil, fertilizers, pesticides and other pollutants end up on the ground and are washed into the storm drains. This toxic soup mixes with millions of gallons of rainwater and flows untreated into local creeks, rivers and the Pacific Ocean – polluting our waterways, as well as degrading neighborhoods and other natural resources.

The effects of storm water pollution are severe and widespread. A study by the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Project has linked storm water pollution in the ocean to increased risk of viral infections, earaches, fever, flu, skin rashes and viral diseases such as hepatitis. LA County Department of Health Services has a standing rain advisory that recommends avoiding contact with ocean water for 72 hours after rainfall ends. And Heal the Bay's 2002-2003 Beach Report Card on LA County's beaches gave 56 percent of monitored beaches a failing grade during wet weather. The issue also has significant economic impacts – as beach attendance has dropped 56 percent since 1983 and clean-up measures are extremely costly. Poor water quality and unsafe beach conditions threaten Los Angeles' tourism-driven revenues, particularly in coastal areas.

With the large population of Los Angeles County, even small, individual actions to reduce storm water pollution can add up to big changes. Among other tips, the campaign encourages residents to: throw trash in a trash can or recycling container (as appropriate), not on the ground or into the storm drain; clean up after your dog every time; always put your cigarette butts in an ashtray; join or organize a community clean up to help protect your neighborhood; Reduce, Reuse and Recycle materials whenever possible. To learn more ways to reduce storm water pollution – log on to www.erasethewaste.com or call 1 (888) CLEAN LA.

The State Water Resources Control Board was created by the Legislature in 1967. The mission of the SWRCB is to ensure the highest reasonable quality for waters of the State, while balancing its beneficial uses. The joint authority of water allocation and water quality protection enables the SWRCB to provide comprehensive protection for California's inland, coastal and ground water sources.

The *Erase the Waste* advertising campaign creative was developed by Santa Monica-based advertising agency, Big Honkin' Ideas (BHI), in conjunction with Los Angeles-based public relations/marketing firm, Rogers & Associates, the public education campaign's prime contractor.

Note: To view copies of the advertising, log on to www.erasethewaste.com.

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The energy challenge facing California is real. Every Californian needs to take immediate action to reduce energy consumption. For a list of simple ways you can reduce demand and cut your energy costs, see our Web-site at <http://www.swrcb.ca.gov>